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RR RUEH DU RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEHSB #1107 3460942
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 120942Z DEC 07
FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2224
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 1685
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 1815
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0425
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1092
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 1440
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 1871
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4299
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0942
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

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ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
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STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/08/2013

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: SADC TALKS STALL, BUT MDC INTENDS TO CONTEST
ELECTION

REF: HARARE 1004

Classified By: Pol/Econ Chief Glenn Warren. Reason: 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) MDC president Morgan Tsvangirai told the Ambassador December 11 that MDC negotiators had returned from South Africa without an agreement. Sticking points are MDC insistence on:
--implementation of a new constitution before the election;
--reconstitution of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC);
--cleansing of voters' rolls and delimitation of parliamentary constituencies under the ZEC;
--an end to intimidation of the opposition and an improved political atmosphere to allow the MDC to hold meetings and have access to the media;
--an election date that would give the MDC sufficient time to prepare for elections;
--international observation of the elections.

¶2. (C) Tsvangirai said negotiations will continue in Harare. Even if an agreement was not reached, the MDC intended to contest the elections. Tsvangirai also stated he was reaching out to the MDC Mutambara faction; he was confident of a rapprochement that would see the two factions participating as a coalition in the elections. Finally, Tsvangirai noted the MDC, despite efforts at fundraising,

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still lacked sufficient resources.

¶3. (C) In a follow-up meeting on December 11, MDC spokesperson Nelson Chamisa told polecon chief that the MDC executive would meet on December 15 and the national council on December 16. He expected both bodies to endorse a decision to participate in elections, even if they occurred in March. Acknowledging that the MDC could face an unlevel playing field, Chamisa said the MDC had no choice. Sitting out the election would allow ZANU-PF to claim legitimacy--its perversion of the electoral process would not be exposed--and

the MDC would likely be finished as a party.

¶4. (C) While Chamisa was also confident about an accord with the Mutambara faction, he was less sanguine about the rift within the MDC's Women's Assembly (Ref). He thought Tsvangirai and the leadership had blundered in removing Lucia

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Matibenga as chair--her removal was potentially more destabilizing than the rupture with the Mutambara faction--but he was cautiously hopeful the damage could be repaired in this weekend's meetings.

Comment

¶5. (C) All signs now point to March elections. Despite the deteriorating economy and wide-spread disenchantment with ZANU-PF, the MDC faces an uphill struggle. It has not yet healed its internal divisions and has not yet begun to seriously campaign. It is under-resourced. And the political atmosphere remains largely unchanged. Whether or not there is a SADC agreement, crucial to MDC chances is the creation of democratic space, a development of which we see no signs.
MCGEE